

# ACT Community Legal Centres COVID-19 Communique

25 March 2020

## Services provided

ACT Community Legal Centres are continuing to deliver essential legal assistance and other support to the most vulnerable members of the Canberra community during the current COVID-19 outbreak.

ACT Community Legal Centres provide legal information, advice and representation on issues including:

- Family law and domestic violence
- Child and Youth Protection Service
- Public housing
- Social security
- Employment
- Discrimination
- Consumer law
- Credit and debt

The broader services of ACT community legal centres include:

- Social work support and case management
- Culturally safe and assured support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Financial counselling services
- Microfinancing and no interest loans

All ACT CLC services are free. All ACT Community Legal Services are currently delivering services by phone, video or online.

## Impact of COVID-19 on clients and vulnerable Canberrans

ACT CLCs are working together to coordinate services and prioritise those people who are most at risk from COVID-19 or the public health measures in place to reduce transmission.

The Women's Legal Centre (WLC) is concerned about the escalation of family and domestic violence in the current situation and the increased risk to women and their children, particularly those subject to parenting orders. The WLC is already managing requests for women who have concerns about their safety or the safety of their children related to illness and/or lock down measures in place. As economic pressure increases due to COVID-19, WLC has also seen conflict about property and financial arrangements arise and expect this to increase.

Care and Consumer Law have been responding to people who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID -19 and who are now unable to pay rent, mortgage, bills or other credit commitments. We are also receiving calls from small business owners who cannot continue to operate and are considering bankruptcy. Care is concerned about the steep increase in the number of people in the community who are facing severe financial stress, many of whom have not previously accessed support services.

Canberra Community Law (CCL) is also concerned about the economic impact of COVID-19 for people trying to access income support and stable and secure housing. CCL is already managing an increase in requests for assistance to navigate the Centrelink and public housing systems as well as seeking assistance with other legal issues including employment disputes. CCL expects demand for its services will continue to rise as the economic consequences of COVID-19 crisis deepens.



**Environmental  
Defenders Office**



**PARSA**  
ANU postgraduate &  
research students'  
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ANUSA and PARSA Legal Services have seen an increase in requests for assistance from students related to tenancy and occupancy issues related to COVID-19, as well as an increase in requests related to the effects of travel bans on eligibility for student and post-study visas and permanent migration.

## Service specific information

### Canberra Community Law

CCL is providing legal advice, assistance and representation to people in the ACT on low incomes for matters relating to tenancy, public housing, social security and disability discrimination law, including issues related to COVID-19. CCL is also still providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through the Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program and through the Street Law program.

- For assistance call **02 6218 7900**
- For referrals email [info@canberracommunitylaw.org.au](mailto:info@canberracommunitylaw.org.au)

### Care Financial counselling and Consumer Law Centre (Care)

Care is providing information, support and advice to people in financial stress. The organisation provides financial counselling, legal advice around credit and microfinance (no interest loans) programs, including a specific program for people who have experienced and left domestic violence.

- For Financial Counselling call **1800 007 007** or email [admin@carefcs.org](mailto:admin@carefcs.org)
- For Microfinancing call **02 6257 1788** or email [microfinanceteam@carefcs.org](mailto:microfinanceteam@carefcs.org)
- For Consumer Law Centre call **02 6143 0044** or email [clc.admin@carefcs.org](mailto:clc.admin@carefcs.org)

### Women's Legal Centre ACT

The WLC is providing specialist advice in relation to family law, care and protection, employment and discrimination issues, including issues related to COVID-19. The Centre's Aboriginal Women's Program, Mulleun Mura, is also still providing culturally safe support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

- Legal Advice and Intake Line is now open 9-5, Monday-Friday (**02 6257 4377**)
- WLC is accepting all referrals on [referral@womenslegalact.org](mailto:referral@womenslegalact.org).

### ANU Students Association Legal Service

The ANUSA Legal Service provides free and confidential legal advice primarily to undergraduate ANU students and ANU student clubs and societies. The service is continuing to offer an uninterrupted service online.

- Contact [sa.admin@anu.edu.au](mailto:sa.admin@anu.edu.au)

### Postgraduate and Research Student's Association (PARSA) Legal

PARSA Legal provides free and confidential legal and migration advice to postgraduate ANU students. PARSA, continue to offer uninterrupted service to students online during the COVID-19 crisis.

- Contact [PARAS@anu.edu.au](mailto:PARAS@anu.edu.au) or [PARSA.Assistance@anu.edu.au](mailto:PARSA.Assistance@anu.edu.au)

### Environmental Defenders Office

The Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) provides free and confidential legal advice in relation to environment and planning law. The EDO offering services in an online format during the COVID-19 crisis.

- People and community groups can contact [canberra@edo.org.au](mailto:canberra@edo.org.au)

